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THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

A SERMON,
PREACHED BEFORE THE MINISTERS

COMPOSING THE

BAY OF QUINTE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

OF THE

METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

IN CANADA,

AT NORTH-POR T,

ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 11TH, 1850,

BY THE

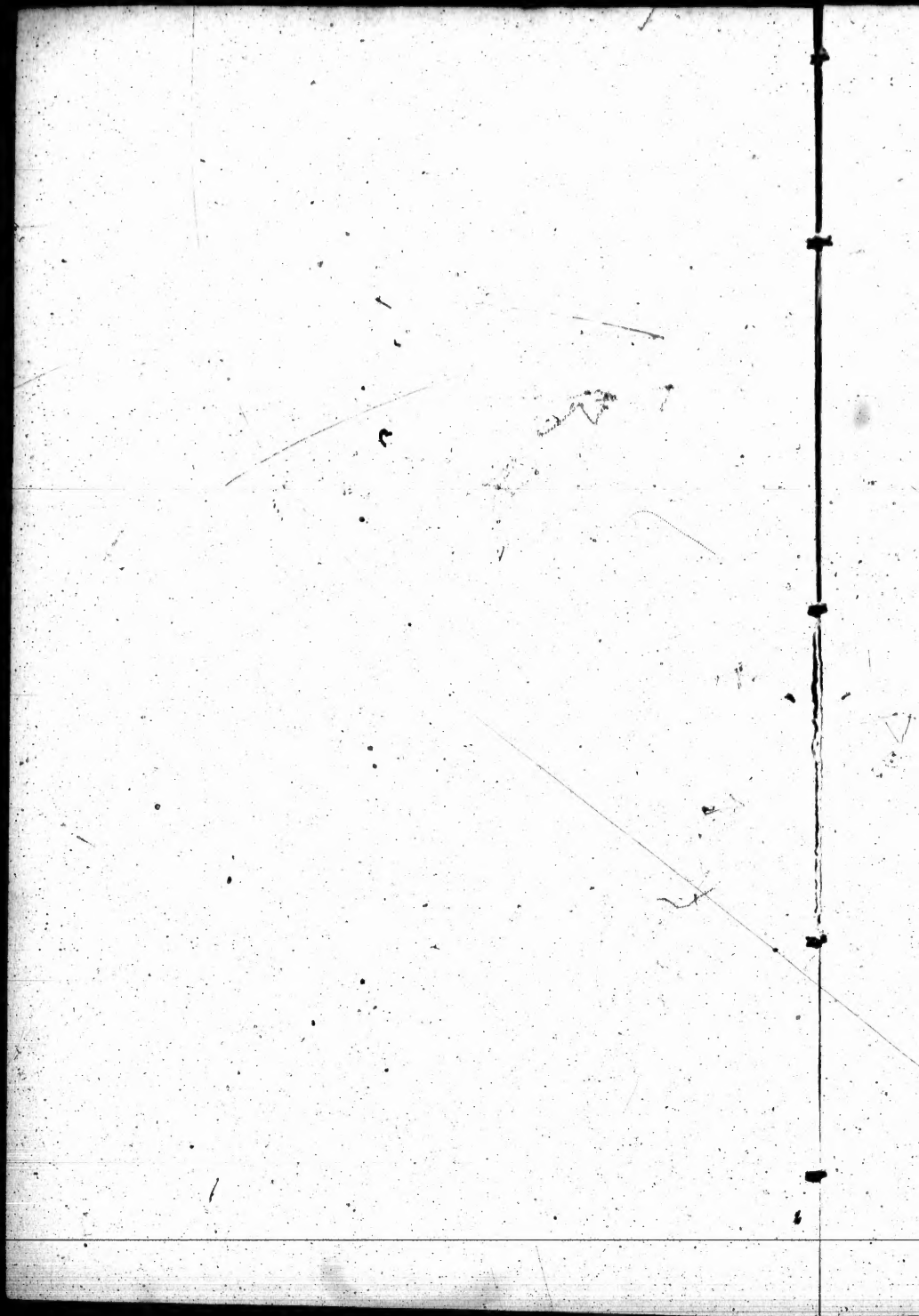
REV. J. H. JOHNSON.

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF SEVERAL MEMBERS OF THE
CONFERENCE, AND OTHERS.

Brockville :

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1850.



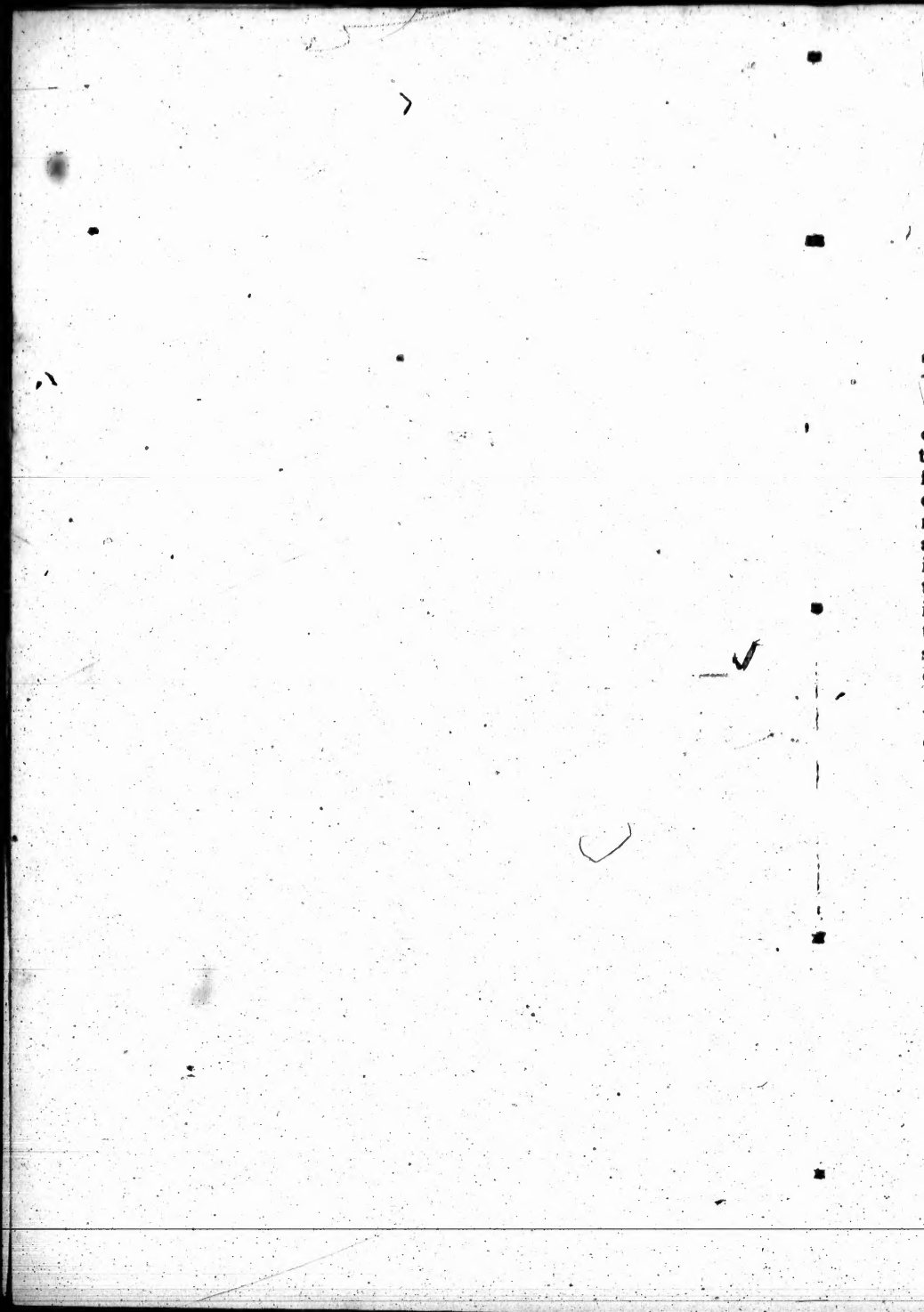
INTRODUCTION.

THIS Sermon was not originally prepared for the press. It was the result of deep reflection on the responsibilities which the Author feels he has assumed in devoting himself to the work of a Christian Minister. These reflections were thrown together, and presented in the form of a *Discourse* at North-Port, during the sitting of the last Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada, in that place. With no intention to *dictate*, the Author ventured to *stir up* the minds of his brethren. He shortly afterwards received requests for a copy of the *Discourse*. Some also solicited its publication. In compliance with their suggestions, it is now given to the public. For its defects the Author alone is responsible.

Entire originality of thought is not promised. Every public speaker knows how difficult it is to be *original* at the present day. But originality in the arrangement and in the mode of illustration, will probably be found.

The Author offers this *Discourse*, with the prayer that it may tend to impress, particularly *young ministers*, with the importance of their calling. "He that winneth souls is wise."

Brockville, September, 1850.



THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able Ministers of the New Testament."
—2 Corinthians iii. 5, 6.

The Religion of the Lord Jesus Christ, my Brethren, concerns every man. Other systems have been adapted, by their peculiarities, to particular countries, and to particular portions of the human family; but this alone meets the wants of mankind at large. It defines the relations between man and man, as well as between man and his Maker,—it prescribes the limits to our indulgences, and shows us what we must do to inherit eternal life; in a word, it is calculated to bring us back to our allegiance, and restore us to the favour of God. The great truths which it unfolds are recorded in the Book of inspiration which cannot lie. This is the authority to which we must appeal in the decision of all controversies and the solution of all mysteries. It is the chart to steer us over the ocean of life, and the compass by which our course should be directed.

Here we have the history of our race. We see how God has borne with the sinfulness, and forgiven the transgressions of his creatures. But in providence, as in creation, he has invariably wrought by *means*. In the beginning his communications with man appear to have been more direct. The earlier members of the human family held intercourse with Him by an *audible voice*.—Afterwards *angels* in human form were entrusted with messages from above. To these succeeded *prophets*, who were accustomed to "make known the will of the Lord": these continued through a long succession of years, embracing some of the holiest and most talented men. But "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his *Son*"; since the ascension of his Son, by the *apostles*; since their death by his *ministers*, their successors, whom he has called and put into the work. This last agency is under the constant direction of the Holy Spirit.

In several respects it has decided advantages over the dispensation of angels. Ministers are but men, and therefore are not raised above those to whom they minister. They can sympathize with the sufferings, and enter into the experience of their brethren. In short, they are on a level with them, while the aid of the Holy Spirit is more than sufficient to counterbalance the disadvantages arising from the frailties of flesh and blood.

With this dispensation my text stands connected. It is the language of one whom the best of men in modern times would be safe to imitate, following his example in all things practicable.—The Apostle speaks of the Christian Minister's labours and duties in chapter 2nd, and inquires, vs. 16th, "who is sufficient for these things?" He proceeds in the first part of this, the 3rd chapter, to show that those who are converted through the instrumentality of Christian Ministers, furnish sufficient evidence of the call of those ministers to preach the gospel—the most satisfactory proof, I may add, which can be adduced. Not that it establishes our superiority, or our ability to work a change upon the human mind; but it proves that God, who never sets his seal to a lie, has made us the *efficient*, though the *unworthy* instruments in His hands of saving precious, blood-bought souls. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able Ministers of the New Testament." In this sense we are "sufficient for these things"; but in no other sense whatever *could* we be "sufficient" for them. The original word, *hikanos*, here translated "able", is the same which, in the 16th verse of the foregoing chapter, is rendered "sufficient"; and this clause in the text may be read thus, "who also hath made us *sufficient* (or *competent*) Ministers of the New Testament."

I design this morning, my Brethren, in using this text as my foundation, to call your attention to the *Qualifications and Duties* of Ministers under the New Testament dispensation of Divine Grace.

The term "minister" signifies properly a *chief servant*; hence an *agent* employed to transact or manage business under the authority of another—a *delegate*, an *ambassador*, the *representative* of a sovereign at a foreign court. Though sometimes used in the Scriptures with a different meaning and with various shades of meaning, it has generally this signification, and I shall so interpret it in the text. Two parties, God and man, have been at variance. God sends his ministers or ambassadors with instructions to make overtures, and persuade the guilty party to come to an understanding and be reconciled. You perceive that the office of minister is at once an office of great responsibility and of great honour. Qualifications of an extraordinary character are required.

Nor are men generally ignorant of this fact. They have a very high standard to which they mean that all ministers shall come up. The evil is they expect too much from them: they expect them to be immaculate. Their conduct is closely watched. "In public and in private, at home and abroad, in the pulpit and in the parlour, and in the street, all eyes are upon them, if not awake to admire their consistency, most anxious to watch for their failings. It is expected of them to be paragons of humility, of heavenly-mindedness, and

of purity ; to be always like a flame of fire in the service of Christ ; always burning to be instrumental in saving souls." They must not give the least indication of the flesh. Well ; if they fully answer every one of these particulars, they barely pass uninjured. But let them fail in a single point, and an excitement is immediately created. The most wicked persons in the community seem to regard themselves as the constituted guardians of ministerial character. Their souls are "vexed within them" when they behold the gospel messengers even slightly depart from the path of rectitude.

My hearers, there is much involved in being truly *holy*. It is a superlatively great thing to maintain a character in which "not a word, nor a look, nor an action, nor the general air and bearing of the man, nor the very gait, shall betray a feeling other than might be looked for in a saint of the noblest attainments, an expectant seraph, an embryo angel." Such a character men demand that a Christian Minister should sustain. No marvel, then, if many are doomed to be disappointed. Fools they are, not to consider that if ministers are liable to err, so are they who pronounce judgment upon them. If the accused are fallible, so is the tribunal before which they are arraigned. Still, there are qualifications which it may be profitable to notice. These I shall distinguish as of a twofold description—*natural and acquired*.

By *natural abilities* I intend those faculties of the soul with which every man is endowed as he proceeds from the hands of his Maker. It is not essential to my purpose, whether they depend on the construction of the skull, as phrenologists inform us, influenced by the proportionate development of each distinct organ, the whole inherited from our ancestors ; or whether the entire mental system is dependent on the arbitrary will of the Almighty Creator. I refer only to the *mental condition* of those whom God calls into His work. No sovereign would appoint a ninny or a maniac to the important post of foreign minister, or ambassador to a foreign court. So the Great Sovereign of the universe, it is quite certain, would never call a fool or a madman into his service. Too many momentous duties are attached to the station—duties which require the exercise of a sound understanding. Look at the servants of God in every age. They have been, often indeed men of indigent temporal circumstances, but men of *good natural parts*. Such were Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Elijah, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Nehemiah. And surely *Paul* had few superiors in this respect. Even the fishermen of Galilee, though of an humble calling, were men of natural ability. True, "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise" ; but while he has passed by *worldly wisdom*, he has eschewed *intellectual inferiority*.

Nor does the fact of a "diversity of gifts" make against my argument. God has work for all, however varied their talents ; but he never employs those who can be of no use in any place.—

It is important that this point be understood at the outset. Let us beware of placing the sacred office too low. Let us claim for it all that nature can confer.—And it is proper that we should. The opponents of the truth have often been men of great intellectual powers (somewhat *disorganized*, I admit), and it is in the order of Providence that they should be excelled on their own ground.

But this qualification alone is insufficient. After all that *nature* can do, there is yet a lack. Nature, rightly so called, is *imperfect*, not to say *corrupt*. Hence something must be *acquired*. The most talented man that ever lived is unfit for the office of ambassador, without a sound knowledge of political science. Now, I am far from contending that religion or the grace of God may be acquired, as mathematics or language; yet it must be *acquired*. It is not born with us. It does not come as a matter of course. It is got by application. Every Christian thus obtains it. Every Christian needs it. How much more the *Christian minister*!

I observe, then, that the gospel minister should himself be taught of God. This should form the basis. It is only God that can make him an "able minister of the New Testament." His heart must be filled with love divine. He must himself have been brought into the favour of God; then will "the love of Christ constrain him," and pity to his fellow men move him, to publish the proclamation of mercy, and as an "ambassador for Christ," make it the business of his life to "beseech men to be reconciled to God." This love to Christ, firmly rooted and grounded in the heart, inciting to obedience to the divine commands, and influencing every action of the life, is the noblest qualification of a Christian minister. When our blessed Lord was about to leave the world and return to his Father, with a view to impress this great truth upon the minds of his disciples, and receive their pledge that they would be faithful to the sacred trust, he put to Peter that heart-moving interrogatory, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" He requires him to repeat the assurance of his affection, extorting from him a second and a third solemn declaration of his attachment to his master. Then, after having taken a triple pledge of the apostle's love to himself, (to use the words of a modern divine,) "he gave over into his hands his blood-bought treasure.—Here are the sheep for whom I laid down my life; dear are they to me as the apple of mine eye; to none but safe hands would I commit them; take them, feed them; guide them; rule them with love; protect them; and finally present them all safe to me in heaven. Without the deepest love to Christ, no man is sufficient for these things. For this love no splendour of talents, no acquired learning, no eloquence can compensate. A minister, to become 'apt to teach', must himself first be taught from above the great doctrine of 'Christ crucified'; and then, under the powerful constraint of pious duty to God, and of glowing charity to man, preach to others what he has himself learned under the tuition of

the Holy Ghost." Yes, my Brethren, he must feel something of that unyielding necessity which impelled Peter to say to the Jewish rulers, in the face of their solemn prohibition, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard"; or which drew from Paul the emphatic declaration, "Necessity is laid upon me, yea, wo is to me if I preach not the gospel"; and which induced the apostle while at Ephesus to "cease not by the space of three years to warn every one, night and day, with tears." Were the man of God, after seeing what he has seen, after learning what he has learned, and after feeling what he has felt, to hold his peace, "the very stones would cry out against him."

The *nature and demands* of the ministerial office, as we shall see hereafter, require fervent piety. These demands cannot be met without it. Fearful indeed is the responsibility which he incurs who, deficient in this particular, obtrudes himself into the work of the ministry. Remember the history of Nadab and Abihu, who "offered strange fire before the Lord", and the breach upon Uzzah, who "meddled, uncalled, with the ark of God." Let the unconverted, then, relinquish the thought of this sacred office for ever.

But if personal piety be thus essential to the minister of Christ, then the more lively its exercise in our hearts, the more fully shall we be fitted for our work. Many considerations press upon us to be *active*. Sinners are hurrying on every hand to the gates of death. Souls are every where perishing through lack of bread. "The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty."—Our own career, however influential upon the world, must necessarily be short. We are *mortals*, but mortals raised to a dignity and trust such as no angel of heaven ever bore. Our work is to be either "a savor of death unto death, or of life unto life", to all with whom we have intercourse. Our business is to "entreat men for Christ's sake"; and the result will be the salvation or condemnation of all thus entreated. We must rid ourselves of the "blood of all men." O, my Brethren, what calls for exertion!—Can we be idle in these emergencies? If no other motive can influence us, let that of *personal interest* induce us to progress in piety until the end of our course. Then shall we hear the welcome plaudit, "Servant of God, well done!" The Christian minister may heartily sing,

"This blessed word be mine,
Just as the port is gain'd;
Kept by the power of grace divine,
I have the faith maintain'd."

But on the other hand, how fearful will be his condition, if he "run well only for a season." How alarming to think that "after having preached to others, he himself should become a cast-a-way."—What if he shall behold in the kingdom those who had been con-

verted through his instrumentality, and he himself be "cast into outer darkness." Yet there is an awful possibility that some may be so situated. Rebels saved—the ambassador rejected!

Again; the great end of the Christian ministry is the conversion of the world. It was instituted for this express purpose. The minister, "speaking after the manner of men," must represent his prince. He should be influenced by similar motives and desires.—He should be a man enjoying the most unbounded confidence of his employer, labouring to complete the work given him to do.—"The ambassador (says one) is to be such as the prince himself would be, if he were to officiate in the specific circumstances in person; as if one spirit actuated them, and one mind dwelt in them, and one soul were shared by them both." It follows, therefore, my Brethren, that the *minister of Christ* cannot be too *Christ-like*. The more like Christ he is, the more perfectly does he realize the ideal of an ambassador, and the more appropriately will he fulfil the errand on which he is sent. He is a perfect *minister* just so far as he is a perfect *saint*.

But that there may be nothing lacking, an ambassador is furnished with *written instructions*, embracing every variety of information upon the matters at issue between the parties, the demands of the one, and the assumptions of the other. He requires to know the history of the whole controversy from the commencement to his own time, and the intentions of his sovereign towards the nation to which he is sent. Such knowledge is necessary to qualify him to treat with the foreign court. And to prevent misunderstandings, misconceptions, undue assumptions of power, and mistakes, these instructions are carefully written down, and bear the signature of the supreme power, or the head of the department of foreign affairs.

The *Christian minister* is never sent, minus his instructions.—That blessed book which we call "the Bible", or *the book*, to distinguish it from all other books, contains not only general, but specific, directions—provisions to meet every individual case which can occur during the period of our ministry. It furnishes us with all we need to know concerning the matter which we have taken in hand, or in other words, the *ins* and the *outs* of the entire dispute, and lays down the conditions on which we are to offer pardon to the offenders. Ought we not to study this valuable Book? What should we think of an ambassador who would neglect to peruse his instructions? What if we should see him lay aside his written authority and directions, and proceed to act upon his own responsibility, or upon the unauthorized opinions of his fellowmen? Should we not denominate him *unworthy of his post*? No less so is the Christian minister who allows any other study to supersede with him the study of God's Holy Word. *This is his Book of Instructions*. Although I am free to admit that the man of God ought to study science—for reasons which I shall

adduce in their proper place—yet this must never interfere with the claims of the Inspired Volume. To every man who errs here I would say pointedly, "This ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone." Paul congratulated Timothy, that "from a child he had known the holy scriptures"; and it was one of, certainly not the least, important advantages, that he would thereby be kept "from fables and endless genealogies."—The Bible should be the minister's constant companion.

Sometimes, however, an ambassador finds his instructions insufficient or inexplicit, or he may not fully comprehend their meaning, or a case may arise which they do not seem to fully cover. He has then to *apply to his sovereign for direction*; and, my Brethren, instructions are very soon forwarded to him, so as to relieve him from his perplexity, and enable him to continue his negotiations. So a throne of grace is ever accessible to the faithful minister; and it is his frequent resort. Here the figure falls far short of the reality. What political ambassador ever enjoyed the privilege of his master's *constant* presence, that he might consult him without delay? What minister residing at a foreign court ever received an *immediate* answer from his master? But the minister of the New Testament is thus favoured. His Sovereign is known to possess *ubiquity*. Nor have any of his servants applied to him in vain. Prayer is the life of the *Christian*. How indispensable to the *minister*! He should breathe an atmosphere of prayer. His sermons should be composed, and delivered, and followed, with the spirit of prayer. Of him it should ever be said, "Behold he prayeth!" With him prayer seems not so much a *duty* as a *privilege*. In this view, it is emphatically such. Without it, no man can become an "able minister."

An ambassador must also be *acquainted with the language of the parties*. It often occurs that the nation to which he is sent is of quite a different language from his vernacular; and it is necessary that he should become perfectly familiar with the foreign language. This exigency is sometimes provided for by selecting a confidential person of another nation who possesses this qualification. But he may be one who had first to learn the language of his employer. This must be *thoroughly learned*. A deficiency in either case would render his work not only *uncertain*, but extremely *difficult*. Recourse must be had to signs, or to an interpreter, when the objects of his mission would be *embarrassed*, if not *defeated*.

There is a language which is peculiar to the people of God. It is one which appears to the wordly-minded as "foolish", as an "unintelligible jargon", but it is a *pure language—a living language*. It is the same kind that is spoken on the other side of Jordan, in the New Jerusalem. The patriarchs and prophets were pretty well acquainted with it; they used to converse in it; and some of them wrote it with tolerable correctness. Saul of Tarsus, while on his way to Damascus with authority from the chief

priests to persecute the church of God, learned the rudiments of it, and afterwards made the most astonishing proficiency in it; though John of Patmos is supposed by many to have excelled him in the purity of his diction and in an acquaintance with the peculiar idioms of the language. And I am told that "the just made perfect", of whom Paul wrote, know more about it than any pilgrim in this vale of tears. Christ has no minister in his employment who is ignorant of this elegant language. It is the medium through which he holds communication with his people. Every minister of the New Testament must be conversant with it. Nor is it difficult to learn. To obtain a knowledge of its alphabet, it is true, often requires considerable mental effort; but this once accomplished, all obstacles are surmounted. It has but one *simple* sound, and few *combinations*. And whether accompanied by all the "thunders of Sinai", or heard in the "still small voice of Horeb", the purport of its communication is nothing more nor less than—*love*! My Brethren, the gospel cannot be successfully preached through any other medium. Justice must not be overlooked; but mercy alone can meet the sinner's case.

It is likewise considered a matter of no small consequence, that a public minister *should not be at variance with the party to which he is sent*. It is not absolutely essential that he should be on terms of intimacy beforehand—for he may at first be an entire stranger to them—but there ought to be no antagonism existing between him and those amongst whom his labours are to be expended. Great care must be taken in this particular in the selection of an ambassador, or no access will be gained to the offending party. Many have been rejected on no other ground than that of being personally obnoxious to the court. The enemy refused wholly to treat upon any terms, or to entertain the question of a settlement, through the medium of a hated party. Nor have these objections always existed prior to the minister's being sent out.—They have frequently arisen from his arbitrary assumptions and his overbearing manner after entering upon his duties.

It is very deeply to be regretted that many Christian ministers have, through similar misconduct, completely defeated the purposes of their calling. The modes in which this may be done are too numerous to mention. Yet I cannot forbear to adduce a few of them. It not unfrequently happens that a pastor damages his influence with his flock by unnecessarily combating their prejudices, by taking a side in neighbourhood contentions, or by identifying himself with particular sections of the community to which other sections are known to be hostile. He may injure himself materially by injudicious public reproof; and especially in dealing with the sinner, he may drive him for ever from the house of God. But worse than all, by engaging in warm political contests, has the messenger of Christ degraded his holy office, and lost the confidence of at least a *portion*—often the *greater portion*—of those

to whom he has ministered. Where a man becomes a political tool, it matters little in whose hands, or on which side, for his usefulness is doomed. Could I gain access to such a minister, I would whisper in his ear, "Let the dead bury their dead—but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." "Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth"; the Christian minister will find that with all the advantages he may possess, the work is sufficiently difficult to "persuade men to be reconciled to God." While he has the "wisdom of the *serpent*", he needs combined with it, as a corrective quality, all the "harmlessness of the *dove*."

Intimately connected with this is another requisite in an ambassador—that he *should devote himself wholly to the work, and take a lively interest in it*. No man is likely to succeed in any undertaking without this qualification. It is well known that a mere sense of duty never influences men so powerfully, as a consideration of advantage. But where duty and advantage, or interest, are combined, we may safely calculate upon success. Yet it is fearful that many have been influenced by inferior considerations.—Such are ill qualified for their work. Suppose, for illustration, that the British minister at China should abandon his negotiations between the two Governments, and devote his time to the cultivation and shipment of *tea*; or the minister at Washington, when measures of vast importance are entrusted to him, should be found engaged chiefly in *mercantile speculations*, seeking his own pecuniary advantage, to the prejudice of his country's interests.

Yet no less inconsistent and reprehensible is the conduct of the minister of Christ who enters upon secular pursuits when he ought to "be about his master's business." How will such a man stand when the day of reckoning comes? Will it avail him to say, "O, I had my own personal concerns to look after! I could not have been expected to spend *all* my time in one employment"? *I think not*. An "inquisition will be made for blood", when it is to be feared that *the blood of souls* will be found in his skirts. O how I have lamented over the conduct of some ministers! To see men of talent, men of evident piety, and men once eminently useful in the work, abandoning their master's service for gain—joining in an unholy "strike" for worldly wages—selling the souls of their fellow-creatures, as well as their own souls, for "filthy lucre". I have been led to inquire, what strange infatuation has come over them; what blindness has happened to them, that they should thus "play the fool" and "work folly in Israel"? This has become one of the greatest curses to the church at the present day. It is alarmingly on the increase. By it the ministerial office has been brought into disrepute, the Redeemer's name scandalized, and the enemy of souls suffered to triumph. The minister of the New Testament cannot be too far remote from a mercenary spirit. He never should be influenced by worldly considerations. His appeal should be as triumphant as that of the poet—

"Saviour of men, thy searching eye
Doth all my inmost thoughts descry:
No goods of earth my wishes raise,
Nor the world's pleasures, nor its praise."

Of the *literary qualifications* of a minister I come now to speak. Their necessity in the political ambassador all will be ready to admit. I shall endeavour to show that the servant of God needs all the advantages which can be derived from them. He ought to be a man of education, for the obvious reasons why any man should be educated—to raise him in the social scale, to elevate his conceptions, and bring him up to his dignity in the creation. But more powerful arguments may be drawn from the nature of the duties he has to discharge. He comes in contact with all classes of men. The gospel must be preached to "every creature." Paul felt himself "a debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise." While the Christian minister is called to stand in the presence of kings and counsellors, he is required to "go out into the highways and hedges." The learned and the illiterate have equally "souls to save." A man of a well-disciplined mind will skilfully accommodate his instructions to the character of his hearers. He will employ language and illustrations suited to the taste of the scholar, and he can descend, with perfect consistency, to the capacity of the uneducated portion of the community. But a man of little learning is in danger of aiming at a display, and of adopting a style as far above his own understanding as above that of his audience. The ignorant may sit aghast; but the refined will be disgusted, and the pious grieved. I do not say that *all* uneducated ministers are of this description. I speak only of the natural tendency of ignorance upon the mind of a public man. I have known, and still know, uneducated preachers of a different stamp—men who have "forsaken all for Christ." Under their labours my soul has often been blessed. Listening to their fervent appeals, I have been convinced that the doctrine of "Christ crucified" may be illustrated without a knowledge of science. I shall never forget the earnestness of their manner, nor yet the success which has attended their preaching.—*God bless these Fathers in Israel, and bring them down to their graves in peace!*—But, my Brethren, the most useful of them have always regretted their want of early educational advantages, and have seized upon every opportunity for mental improvement which has, during their ministerial career, come within their reach. A powerful argument this in favour of an educated ministry.

It is proper to observe here, while advocating this qualification, that our learning should have a *reference to the ministry*. Universal knowledge no man can acquire. We ought, therefore, to study such branches as will be of the greatest utility in the situation which we occupy. The more learning we have, the better, if it is under the influence of divine grace, and can be brought to

illustrate the Sacred Writings. But without this use of it, the gospel minister, with all his learning, is but "as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."

The eloquent and pious Dr. Harris has very clearly shown the desirableness of ministerial education. "It is predetermined (he says) by the natural activity of the human mind; and by the tendency of the gospel to excite that activity. Let the gospel obtain admission into the mind, and from that moment the most torpid specimen of humanity is quickened into a new mental as well as moral life. Even the mind which was previously alive and vigorous, becomes conscious of a new impulse to activity, and of a new sphere in which to spend it. In finding a God, man finds the centre of all things; and henceforth the tendency of his mind is ever to harmonize the discordant, to arrange the displaced, and to assign to every thing its right position in the great circle which surrounds the Deity. In finding 'the truth', he finds an infallible standard by which every thing is to be tested; henceforth he would fain try every pretension, weigh every claim, by its relation to this standard, and estimate every thing accordingly. And as the volume of nature is written in illumined characters and pictured forms, purposely to awaken early curiosity, and to excite the inquiry, 'what meaneth this?' so the volume of inspiration is constructed expressly to stimulate the activity of the renewed mind.—It is distinguished by its earnest commendations of knowledge, and by its power of exciting a thirst for it. It at once creates light, and courts it. Not only does it extol knowledge as a glory, but commands us to seek for it as a most sacred duty. * * It is an adjudged case; a settled question; settled by no arbitration of ours, but by the predeterminate counsel of Him who gave to our mental constitution its activity, and to the Bible the power of arousing that activity. Unless, therefore, you do violence to the mind, and repress its activity, education to some extent becomes a religious necessity. And if education be thus desirable for every inquiring Christian mind, how much more important must it be for the man of God, who, in his public ministry, is, in effect, to aid in directing the religious education of others!"

But the most conclusive of all arguments in behalf of an educated ministry, is to be found in *the nature and contents of the Bible, in connexion with the relation which the messenger of Christ sustains to it*. The Bible was written in the Hebrew and Greek languages. Must not its expositor make himself acquainted with these languages, in order to understand its contents? True, we have a *translation*—and an excellent one it is—but there are to be found in all languages terms and idioms which lose by a translation; and every scholar will discover beauties in the original, which are not so clear in modern languages. But although every part were fully expressed in the translation, the Bible abounds in imageries, descriptions of oriental customs and institutions, and has repeated

geographical representations, which render it indispensable for its expositor to be familiar with ancient literature. And not only so, but it will be found that scarcely a single science which has stood the test of a rational investigation, has been overlooked by the sacred writers. The Bible has been proved to be the great textbook of science, and often the contents of an entire human volume are discovered in one of its verses. To select only one of the many. St. James tells us that "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Who can fail to discover here a reference to the solar system? Yet to a modern philosopher is given the credit of enlightening the world upon this subject!

But I need not multiply examples. If any man is in doubt of the propriety of learning in the Christian minister, let him acquaint himself with the writings of Paley, of Dick, of Chalmers, of Wesley, of Watson, and others, who have completely refuted the cavils of the most accomplished infidels, and shown that the Bible stands, as ever, an impregnable fortress against the attacks of its most determined foes. By such men, how triumphantly has that infamous maxim, "Ignorance is the mother of devotion," been hurled back into the teeth of the infidel, and the truth of God vindicated! Although all men have not the facilities for becoming thus extensively learned, all may improve their minds. The Discipline of our Church has wisely provided that every candidate for holy orders must pass through a certain course of studies. But it obliges no one to stop here. Education is the business of life. I envy not the mental condition of that minister who can settle down in habits of indolence—spending his precious time in idle gossip—indulging in sensual gratifications, and neglecting to increase his stock of ideas. I pity the people to whom he ministers. But above all, I would grieve to be his successor in any charge: As "evil communications corrupt good manners", and bad habits are contagious, I should expect to meet with an unfortunate set of parishioners. How much better for the minister to take Paul's advice to Timothy, and "give attendance to reading!"

I remark lastly on ministerial qualifications, that the minister, whatever may be his attainments, *must be sent*. It will not do for him to run of his own accord; he must come from his sovereign, with the credentials of his authority; otherwise he will not be received by the nation to which he resorts. And if he were re-

* Among the "bad habits" above referred to, the use of tobacco deserves a special notice. *Chewing, smoking, and snuff-taking* are extensively practiced by itinerant preachers at the present time. The evil is *physiological, mental, and moral*. There seems to be an extraordinary fatality attending some ministers. They are voluntary slaves to this revolting drug. I fear that the doctrine of *self-denial* must be enforced by them with a bad grace.

ceived, his actions would not be official. No treaty which he might be instrumental in making would be binding.

So of the chosen servant of God. The command to him is "*go*." "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." And the man who is called must bring his *Commission* along with him. This Commission must bear the impress of Heaven's Great Seal upon it, or men will have a right to dispute the negotiator's pretensions. The important Instrument authorizes its bearer to "*go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature*". On the Seal is engraved in indelible characters the device, "*Holiness to the Lord*." Even the apostles were not sent without it; for the Saviour instructed them to "tarry in the city of Jerusalem (after his ascension) until they should be endued with power from on high." That the Holy Ghost was intended, is evident from John XIV. 16, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth." St. Paul received his authority from the same source. "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord", says he, "who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." Dr. Adam Clarke says, "No man should engage in the work of the Christian ministry, unless he verily feel that he is *inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost* to take upon him this office." The call must come from above, and the business of the Church is to furnish the external ratification.

Clothed with such authority, the ministers of Christ are thus alluded to by that unrivalled sacred poet, Charles Wesley, who had in view a passage in the 2nd Epistle to the Corinthians:—

"God, the offended God Most High,
Ambassadors to rebels sends;
His messengers his place supply,
And Jesus begs us to be friends."

This brings me to the *second* part of my subject—the *Duties* of those who are called in the text, "able ministers of the New Testament." Many of these duties I have necessarily anticipated; and at first glance, it might appear that the order of my discourse should have been reversed. But I have deemed it more instructive to select the *man*, and then show him his *work*—anticipating only what is requisite in forming the basis of his qualifications. Nor shall I trace any farther the analogy which I followed through the first part. The duties are so numerous, that I shall glance at the principal ones only, and that briefly.

The great work of the Christian minister is *to save souls*. All his exertions must have a reference to this end. He finds men in the broad way to destruction—it is his duty to show them the path of life. He finds men ready to perish—he should point them to the cross. He must invite, persuade, beseech, and offer mercy, and if necessary, threaten with the terrors of the law, those who

are in rebellion against the moral government of God. And this work must be continued, "whether men will hear or whether they will forbear".

On this point, you will pardon me for introducing a description with which I became familiar in my boyhood. It is to be found in a publication which is not very generally known to the public now. The piece is anonymous, and relates to the "methodist preacher", but may be taken as a model of any "able minister of the New Testament" in his *labours of love* :—

"The methodist is indefatigable in what he considers the duty of his Christian calling; he is zealous in his endeavours to bring sinners to the throne of grace; he is bold in reproving wickedness wherever he finds it, in high or low, rich or poor; he is earnest and affectionate in his efforts to draw erring mortals from the abyss of ruin, and place them on the firm ground of Christian hope: he deprives them of all hope in themselves, that they may fix their dependence on the Rock of Ages. He leaves no stone unturned to advance the cause of the gospel; he is a lion to the hardened sinner, and a lamb to the humble penitent; he travels every where, and 'preaches the gospel to every creature'; wherever 'two or three are gathered together', he considers that place a fit temple for the worship of God, whether it be in a dwelling-house, a barn, a school-house, in the shade of the forest, or under the bare canopy of heaven; he is not confined to temples made and expressly dedicated to the worship of Jehovah, but considers every place sufficiently dedicated to that purpose which offers an occasion of doing good; he pervades every part of the country, and carries the glad tidings of salvation to those places where, but for him, they had never come. He regards no distance as too great, no way too rough, no place too obscure for his exertions; cold and heat, wind and storms, hunger and thirst, do not appal him; scoffing and insult have no effect upon him, but to make him, if possible, more zealous in the duties of his calling. If the mad populace hurl firebrands, he 'reasons with them of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come'; he 'heaps coals of fire on their heads'; madness gives place to admiration, insult to penitence, and those who came to scoff remain to pray."

To the truth of the above picture, many of the early settlers of Canada can abundantly testify. The lives of those indefatigable labourers will be embalmed in the grateful recollections of many until the end of their days. But I have given this account, chiefly because of the detail of the minister's *duties* which it furnishes.

One department of the minister's work which the apostle mentions, is to "preach the word"; and he requires that a preacher "rightly divide the word of truth". *Pulpit ministrations*, then, constitute a portion of our duties. But how few of us, my Brethren, are "sufficient for these things"! The objects of preaching are, to illustrate and enforce revealed truth; to draw out and dis-

close to the most ignorant hearers the mysteries of the gospel ; to "bring forth out of the treasure things new and old". Not only must vice be denounced and virtue commended, but the minds of our congregations should be *informed*. Many are so circumstanced that they are mainly dependent on their minister for instruction.—The office of *teacher* is thus blended with his other duties.—Rightly to supply this demand, requires a great draft upon his time. Severe mental labour must be endured. He has to investigate, compare subjects with subjects, explore, dig deep, and inwardly digest ; then he needs all the command of language and facility of speech which nature has given him, (for without communicative talent, no man is fit to be a minister,) to sustain him in his high calling. He has the sinner to convince, alarm, and persuade ; he has the lambs to feed, nourish, and protect ; he has the feeble to confirm, encourage, and strengthen ; the church must be built up and edified ; and he has to watch over the souls of those for whom he must give an account. The most consummate fidelity to his master will be expected. There must be no flinching when duty calls. He may well employ the language of the poet—

" Shall I, for fear of feeble man,
The Spirit's course in me restrain ?
Or, undismay'd in deed and word,
Be a true witness of my Lord ?

Shall I, to sooth th' unholy throng,
Soften thy truth, or smooth my tongue,
To gain earth's gilded toys, or flee
The cross endured, my Lord, by thee ?

Never did a warrior go forth to battle in need of greater courage than the minister of the cross requires in delivering the message of his master. He is bound to "declare all the counsel of God."

But public preaching is a small part of the minister's duties. He has the *ordinances to administer* ; as baptism, matrimony, and the sacrament of the Lord's supper.—Let no man deem these trifling. They are all of a serious nature, and require to be seriously observed. They of course vary in magnitude with the extent of a man's charge ; but every ordained minister must attend to them more or less. Much also depends upon the *manner* in which they are administered. If this is what it should be, they will be made a blessing to all concerned. They are "holy things" which the minister is called upon to deal with.

There are also many things in the *relations and necessities of the church* which engage the minister's attention. He is identified with the benevolent institutions of the age. Bible, tract, and temperance societies, and all associations having in view the amelioration of the human family, demand his aid. Much of his time is occupied with their calls. He must likewise consider the condition of the poor, the sailor, the prisoner, the ignorant, the de-

graded, the stranger, and the outcast, at home and abroad. The cause of education requires his advocacy, if not his supervision.— He has to look out and encourage in the church such members as give evidence of a call to the work of the ministry. The missionary enterprise must be provided for. The gospel messenger has to arrange the means for carrying it on. For this purpose he is often called upon even to *beg* from those who have the ability to give. The sick must be visited and awakened. The church must be kept pure. The disorderly must be called to an account. The outward means of religion must be maintained. And the whole gospel machinery must be kept in operation.

Pastoral visiting shall next be considered. This is a duty, not only too much *neglected*, but *abused* where it is not neglected.— The minister who visits his people at their homes has an opportunity to make himself familiar with their peculiar circumstances, and can the better accommodate his public instructions to them.— He, generally speaking, obliges them by this course, whilst the ties which bind the minister and his people together are greatly strengthened.

For this duty we have apostolical precedents. St. Paul, in his farewell discourse to the elders of the church at Ephesus, reminds them of the following facts: "Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews; and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." We read that "Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do."

There is evidently something in the pastoral relation which renders this duty *imperative*, and I will add, *delightful*. What could afford greater joy in the breasts of either the apostles or their brethren? It is said of these two apostles, that "they returned to the Lycaonia, and to Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith." Was not this "confirmation" effected through the medium of pastoral visiting? What more likely to strengthen the brethren, and confirm them in the faith, than this, to visit them from house to house, recommending personal and family religion, and praying for their welfare?

But the minister's business is not confined to visiting the *brethren*. He is required, with all Christians, to visit the needy of all descriptions, within his reach. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father (says St. James) is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the

world." Why is it that some men, whose pulpit abilities are below mediocrity, are so successful in the ministry—not a year passing without the conversion of souls under their labours? The secret of their success lies in *frequent visiting*. The most eloquent preachers, on the other hand, through an omission of this duty, are compelled to mourn over labours apparently useless. No man is fit to be called a pastor who neglects this duty.

Observe, however, it should not be permitted to come in contact with other duties already pointed out. There is a vast difference between visiting *sons*, and visiting *all the time*. That eminent divine, Dr. Doddridge, laid it down as a rule, that a minister should not be bound to pay a pastoral visit to each family within his charge oftener than twice a year; though he might go more frequently, if circumstances would allow.

I said that this duty has been abused. It certainly has, when we do not make these visits subservient to the great end of our calling, the salvation of sinners. But I invite particular attention to a practice very prevalent among Methodist preachers, and which, perhaps, arises in part from the nature of our itinerant work. It is that of spending day after day and night after night in the houses of the people,—not in a private apartment, for pious meditation, mental improvement, or wrestling with God, but in the family circle to *while away the time*. The important duties of the pastoral office are lost sight of, and the minister of Christ sinks down to the level of a common *visitor*. Far be it from me, however, to charge our excellent system of itinerancy with having any tendency in that direction: I assert only, that the practice of travelling into so many different neighbourhoods is liable to such an abuse. Perhaps, also, the neglect of the people to supply their minister with a suitable home, may contribute to the evil; still the latter will always, by a judicious arrangement of some kind, have it in his power to guard against it. And, let me add, his character as a minister is involved in his conduct in this matter.

I shall finally particularize *the care of the young*, as constituting an essential part of the minister's work. "Feed my lambs", is an exhortation virtually addressed to every messenger of the cross.—At least one third of our congregations will be found to be composed of children and youth. Instructions addressed to their minds are apt to be treasured up. Discourses should occasionally be delivered especially to them. The claims of society upon them should be distinctly set forth. They should be taught the advantages of early piety. To this end, Sabbath schools and Bible classes ought to be established. The pastor must see that they are properly conducted. If need be, he must take the charge of some, and he should have the general superintendence of all, of them. Children should be taught to study the Bible, to understand its doctrines, and to live in accordance with its precepts. Were this department properly attended to, a salutary change in the state of society

would soon be witnessed, and a foundation laid on which to rear the noblest structure.

The *qualifications* and *duties* of ministers have thus passed under review. We have seen what God expects, and what man has a right to expect, from those who are entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation. It is evident that, whom God calls, him he qualifies for his own work, and that the ambassador is dependent on the authority of his Master for his "sufficiency."

I shall conclude with two or three general deductions.

The Christian Ministry is, to the world, one of the most important institutions in existence. Talk of civil rights and of political governments! They bear no comparison in value with the ministers of the word. The objects contemplated by them, however noble and ennobling, sink into insignificance by the side of these weightier matters. The former relate to time, the latter to both time and eternity. Those are identified with man's temporal, these with his spiritual interests. Not that ministers are sufficient of themselves to accomplish, or even "to think any thing as of themselves", but they are put into this dignified office by the Great Ruler of the universe. He "*hath made them able ministers*". Although the *officers* are frail mortals, the *office* itself is worthy of Him who created it. In one particular it conspicuously differs from all worldly offices. In them we often find men who dignify their office; but no mortal ever made the office of minister *honourable*—though where ministers live as they ought, they are entitled to respect for the sake of their office.

But the mere honour of the office is a circumstance of no great moment. Its importance must be inferred from other facts.—Abolish it, and what a position the world would soon be in! Of what avail would men's civil rights be to them? Even with access to all the inferior means, aided by that inestimable gift, the Book of Revelation, a lack would be felt. And how few would study their Bible, without the powerful persuasion and valuable instruction of a gospel ministry! There is here a stimulus which can not be derived from any other source. Let me be distinctly understood. I do not say that no equivalent could be supplied by the Great Author of the Christian Ministry. I speak only of what we have. In this list the ministry of reconciliation ranks high. And from this fact two inferences may be drawn:

First, *ministers themselves should feel the responsibility which is attached to their office.* How circumspectly should they walk!—Nothing should be allowed to encroach upon their duties, or draw their minds off from Him by whom they are employed.

And in the second place, *the people who are ministered unto should attentively consider their own relation in this affair.* It is for them to embrace the gospel which is preached. If they reject

it, they are without excuse. On them, moreover, devolve some material duties. The temporal support of the dispensers of the word, is one of these. The Apostle, in writing to the Corinthians, has so clearly presented this subject, that I cannot forbear to quote his words: "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? • • Do ye not know that they who minister about holy things live of the things of the temple; and they who wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel:" that is, should be supported by those who are benefited by their labours, as is the case with any other professional or labouring men. This is the plain meaning of Paul's words, and the command is as binding as any ordinance of God.

Similar to this is my second general remark: viz., that *to make an able minister, it is necessary to have a praying people.* On what other principle can we account for the request which concludes so many of the apostolical letters, "*Pray for us*"? Who does not feel his hands strengthened in any enterprise by the co-operation of friends? Does not the politician, when agitating the passage of a measure, seek to have his proposition backed by the petitions of the people? No man needs such assistance more than he who is called to "stand between the living and the dead."—My Christian brethren, if you wish your minister to succeed, *pray for him.* If you neglect this duty, complain not of barrenness in the church. The *end* cannot be accomplished without the *means.*

My concluding inference from the whole subject is this; *the minister of the New Testament must look to eternity for the fruits of his labours.* True, he should be encouraged to expect *some* fruit here—for otherwise he would soon despair—but eternity alone will fully develop his usefulness. The minister's work relates particularly to the *heart.* Impressions made upon that "deceitful" instrument are not always known here; but they shall be hereafter. The effects of a man's life seldom, if ever, terminate at his death: they are inherited by after generations. And how delightful the reflection to the servant of God at the close of his life, that he has spent it in his master's service! Thus spoke the author of my text: "The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." Such should be the language of every minister in his dying hour.

But this is not all. Years after his triumphant entrance into heaven, what rapturous scenes may burst upon his view! Yonder approach a large retinue of the heavenly messengers, escorting one of the redeemed. As they draw near, the former minister recognizes in him the person of an old acquaintance. He advances to meet him, and is hailed as the instrument of his conversion.—

Another comes! and yet another—with the same exclamation.— Still more are added to the number. Are these “seals to his ministry”? Nay, my Brethren, they are rather “stars in the crown of his rejoicing”. His *ministry* has now no longer need of *seals*.

In view of such a scene, tell me, is it any disgrace to a man to be a “minister of the New Testament”?

May God multiply, a thousandfold, the number of “able ministers” to His Church!

